

Tibetan Oral History Project Interview H.0216.01

The subject is a Gelugpa incarnate lama from Drepung monastery who later lived in India and was well known to be knowledgeable about Tibetan political affairs. This interview discusses in detail about the events surrounding the death of the 13th Dalai Lama and the struggles of Kujar and Lungshar after the Dalai Lama's death, as well as the death of the Drönyerchemmo Kogpo and about how the Ganden Tripa Ami was almost punished for doing the wrong divination on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

Q

His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama passed away in the Water Bird Year and in the Water-Monkey year (the preceding year) he issued a testament which is well known as 'The Water-Monkey Year Testament.' [tib. chu spre zhal gdams]. You might have been in your monastery at that time. Could you tell me under what circumstances this testament was issued?

A

I cannot say the real reason for issuing this testament, but I learnt that there were indications of the Dalai Lama's dissatisfaction at the working of the government officers.

Q

Was the Dalai Lama unwell at that time?

A

I think that probably he was not ill at that time.

Q

Later, on the 24th or the 25th, He could not attend the ceremony of Gyütö or Gyüme - one of them meant going too far. So, how long had he been sick?

A

I think he wasn't ill for many days. When Phurchog Champa [tib. phur lcog byams pa] Rinpoche and Muru [tib. rme ru] Trisur [tib. rme ru khri zur] Rinpoche appealed for a

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private audience to request him to [live long], Kujar didn't let them in. This is what I had heard at that time. I was very young and was in the monastery. On the morning of the 30th day of the month, we were called to an urgent mangja and I went too. As I went there, I saw a few monks in tears. Since I was too young at that time, I could not understand why they were weeping. Then I asked my fellow monks what had happened. They said, 'Now our luck has dried up,' [tib. bsod nams skam song]. Still I could not understand what they meant and I didn't dare to ask people. Only when I reached my room and asked my teacher, he scolded me saying, "How dull-headed you are. Didn't you hear the shengo reading the letter requesting the prayers, [tib. skyabs tho]? The Dalai Lama passed away. I came to know then.

Q

I don't think it was on the morning of the 30th. He passed away in the evening of the 30th.

A

It must be, then on the first day of the month.

Q

It seems, the first day was missing that year [according to Tib. Calendar]. The monks of Drepung monastery were served mangja?

A

Yes. They were told that it is an emergency and everyone has to attend the tea. At that time we didn't know. Otherwise, I heard that they have also offered butter lamps all over Drepung. My labrang was situated independently and we didn't have any relations with the khamtsen and the mitsen, hence we did not know about it. We didn't receive any message.

Q

Were you not required to pull down the fringes and the curtains of your windows and the doors?

A

This was done only in the day. We did not know about it earlier.

Q

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You have to pull down the banners made from the yak hair [tib. thug] and the victory banner from roof tops too?

A

No. You don't have to pull down the whole banner, only the crest of the banner, like the trident crest. Dombo [tib. gdong por] Trunyichemmo was at that time in charge of all these. He has been newly appointed as a trunyichemmo. Just before the demise of the Dalai Lama, Jawdang [tib. lcog steng] too was appointed.

Q

Had Jawdang been already appointed at that time?

Q

He was appointed before the Dalai Lama passed away. He was the youngest among the trunyichemmo

Q

He was called Legdenla [tib. legs ldan lags] right?

A

Yes. At that time, they gave the monks a three sang coin for the first time so the people called it the unlucky coin [tib. kha nag sgor mo].

Q

When did they give this coin?

A

They gave it just before the Dalai Lama passed away.

Q

You mean the coin was printed before that, but it was the first time giving to the monks at the alms, right?

A

Yes.

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Q

Did the monastery perform any special rituals?

A

Yes, they recited the Lama Chöpa [tib. bla ma mchod pa] prayer and made offerings. Other than this, there weren't any special rituals. Drepung had no such special traditions.

Q

What did the tratsang do?

A

We went for the morning prayer assembly and then returned to our monk's apartment. The monks chanted the Lama Chöpa prayer and made Tshog offerings.

Q

At night they burnt butter lamps on the house tops. Otherwise, there were no other activities, right?

A

Yes. Then for a quite a number of days, mourning was observed and banners and flags were taken down.

Q

Did the shengo hold the stick in his hand during the prayer assembly?

A

Yes. He did.

Q

Did he wear the hat as well?

A

I was not paying attentive to that.

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Q

I heard that the government lay officials had to remove the crest of their hats. I wonder what the tsidrung did. So, did the monasteries observe the "weekly ritual" prayers called Duntsig, [tib. bdun tshigs? [NOTE: According to Tibetan death rituals, these weekly rituals are observed for seven weeks beginning six days from the day the person died.]

A

No such rituals were done by the monasteries. Whatever the rituals and prayers the government did, the monasteries only observed the mourning. The government did many things like the Dalai Lama tutors performed rituals for the remains. [tib. gdung sgrub]

Q

So. After this came the Kujar trouble?

A

Yes. I heard that the medium of Nechung was terminated for offering the wrong medicine to the Dalai Lama. Also the doctor Amchi Champa [tib. byams pa] too was demoted and exiled.

Q

What did the medium do?

A

The medium was Gowo Chösür. He told his servant to bring the medicine bag.

Q

Was that the medium or the protective deity?

A

It was kind of strange wherein at the beginning it was the medium and then it was the deity. Actually, since the medium was not in trance, he couldn't have told them to bring the medicine bag, right?

Q

I heard that the oracle came into trance without invoking the deity?

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A

I have not heard that.

Q

I heard that he I heard that he came into trance without invoking and told his servant to bring him the medicine bag. Anyway, was the medium himself a doctor?

A

No. He wasn't.

Q

Then how did he ask his servant to bring him the medicine bag?

A

I don't know. I have no knowledge of him being a doctor.

Q

Anyhow, the medicine was offered to the Dalai Lama, right?

A

It was said that a medicine was offered and that the medicine was the wrong one.

Q

It was said that he offered the Tibetan medicine dephinium trichorum [tib. ga bur] for the fever disease and it was also said that the medicine 'Chamjom Powo Judun' [tib. dpa'o bcu bdun] or Jubzhi [tib. bcu bzhi] was offered?

A

Yes, that was the medicine. After it has already been taken by the ailing Dalai Lama, they said it was the wrong medicine he was given.

Q

Such are the stupidities they indulged, right?

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A

Yes. Then after the death of the Dalai Lama, Kujar, his favorite, was accused of not allowing Phurchog Rinpoche and Trisur Rinpoche to have a private audience with the Dalai Lama. That was the primary charge leveled against him. But basically, Kujar's harsh and bullying predictions had nurtured animosity in the heart of many of the officials. Then, another charge against him was that he had not informed anyone about the illness of the Dalai Lama. Kujar's defense was that he had informed the Kashag. He said that he had personally gone to Kashag to inform them. This was revealed when he was called for interrogation. Kujar had the chance to speak in his defense but there was no one to support him.

Q

Kujar was called for interrogation for two days?

A

Yes. That's true.

Q

The 13th Dalai Lama had reportedly handed over a bunch of letters to Kujar Künphel [tib. kun 'phel] which he kept in his own house. Lungshar and his supporters were said to be after these letters. When Lungshar learnt that the letters were in the possession of Kujar, he went to see Kujar with lot of gifts under the pretext of consoling Kujar on the demise of the 13th Dalai Lama. During this meeting, Lungshar had told Kujar that "Since the Dalai Lama has passed away, many things could happen. So under such circumstance we should remain united." And he made Kujar burn all those letter. Those letters were said to be personal letters sent by Lungshar to the Dalai Lama which contained criticisms against all the officials in power. The Dalai Lama is said to have handed over these letters to Kujar. Did you hear about this?

A

I have not heard about it. I was a child at that time but later also I did not hear about such letters.

Q

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There is a group of people who say this. They claim to have had personal talks with Kujar himself regarding this.

A

It seems Kujar must not have been aware of the importance of those letters. Lungshar's request to burn the letters should have aroused Kujar's suspicions.

Q

It is said that Lungshar went to Kujar many times, like once in the morning and then again in the evening. Then when was the tsondu called?

A

The tsondu was called immediately after the demise of the Dalai Lama. Wasn't your tutor the abbot of the tratsang?

No. He wasn't.

Q

Who was the abbot of Loseling at that time, who was the abbot of Loseling?

A

It was Lhopa Khenpo. He was the abbot during the reign of Reting too. His predecessor Gowo Khenpo Lodrö Gyentsen [tib. blo gros rgyal mtshan] completed his term of office after giving the tonggo of Rigtra [tib. rigs grwa] twice. Then Lhopa Khenpo took over from him and he also gave the tonggo of Rigtra twice. After Lhopa Khenpo, it was the Tsangpa Khenpo [tib. gtsang pa mkhan po]. At that time I was in the monastery. He was a nice person and didn't make people suffer but he had to resign owing to inefficiency and lapses of his servants, the one became the laja [tib. bla phyag] and one who was the tratsang chöndze and was related to the Samye Khenchö [tib. bsam yas mkhan chos]. He was otherwise efficient but not authoritative. Much later, there was even talk that he was drinking alcohol. Later he could not fulfill his religious obligations. He succumbed to disease [tib. grib] and died. The laja too died.

Q

Did he succumb to this disease during his abbotship or later?

A

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The abbot succumbed to it after his resignation and after he had handed over his abbotship. He came to my tutor for treatment but could not get completely cured.

Q

Who was the Gomang Abbot at that time?

A

I am not sure who the abbot was at that time because there was frequent change of abbots of Gomang at that time. At the time the abbot was Lodrö Gyentesn or it was the Mongolian Wöser Dorje [tib. 'od zer rdo rje].

Q

The famous one, right?

A

Yes, then it was the abbot from Hor with the bald head and the one called Lama Shang and Chönphe! Söpa [tib. chos 'phel bzod pa] from Lhawangling [tib. lha dbang gling].

Q

Could you tell me about Kujar Künphel episode and his subsequent exile?

A

What I have heard was that in the beginning Kapshöpa had suggested that Kujar be made the Regent to the tsondu but later things happened otherwise as Kujar was put in the Sharchenjog [tib. shar chen lcog] prison. I don't know what had really happened. Kujar's father was put in the Shöl prison. Finally on the 29th of the 12th month [two days before the Tibetan New Year], both Kujar and his father were sent into exile on the same day. One was sent going clockwise around the Barkhor and the other going counter-clockwise around the Barkor.

Q

Why did they arrest Kujar's father?

A

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I heard the father used the Kujar's name and made the miser to suffer a lot. When some people warned him not to do that too much, he would say, "No problem, we have to chase the donkey when it goes."

Q

So the father seemed to be powerful. Later on I heard that Kujar didn't have any property, what happened?

A

I am not sure whether Kujar himself had a private house because he stayed with the Dalai Lama. But there was lot of talk that the father built houses and so on.

Q

He was like sharing the livelihood the Dalai Lama, right?

A

Yes, later he built the Jensal [tib. spyen bsal] Palace which was supposed to be his, but later it was owned by the government. On the day when Kujar was exiled. Ultimately, I heard that some front part of this palace was given to Kujar during period of the two sitsab. It was when Kujar came back from China that he got the front part of the palace. We all heard the moaning sound of the hills near Drepung. We all heard the moaning and whining sound of the hills. At that moment my tutor said to me, "I am old and will not live long but you are young and will live to see the day. Whether he is good or bad, Kujar was the favorite of the Dalai Lama, like the pores on his skin. But such ill treatment meted to him will definitely bring unhappiness and evil times. We will never be happy." He said these words. Kujar was exiled on the 29th of the last month of the year. That day the hills moaned and the sound died down slowly into the eastern side.

Q

Sometime before or after the banishment of Kujar, Drönyerchemo Kogpo died suddenly and an Abbot of Drepung too died under similar circumstances. Do you know about these?

A

I don't know in detail about it, but I think it was Dülwa Khenpo who used to be the tutor to Kündeling, who died.

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Q

Under what circumstances did these two die?

A

I don't know.

Q

There are two versions. One version has it that they were given poison, while the second version believes that Gönpö, the protector deity of Norbulinga was annoyed. Whatever may be the cause of their death, they died on the same night, under similar circumstances. I am not sure whether one of them was Dülwa Khanpo, but the other one was definitely Kogpo Drönyerchemo. On the night when Kogpo died, Shöl Trekhang, who later became Kalön Lama, was sleeping with him in the same room. Around midnight, he had heard Kogpo coughing. Trekhang woke up and asked him what was happening to him. Soon Kogpo vomited blood and fell down, never to rise up again. They had no time to call the doctor. Dülwa Khenpo too died that same night. One group of people maintained that both the Dülwa Khanpo and Kogpo were supporters of Kujar, and another group says that he challenged Kujar, hence it annoyed Gönpö, the deity who caused their end. Whether it was the Gönpö's wrath or not, they did die.

A

I definitely heard that the Dülwa Khenpo died and he was the tutor to Kündeling. But I don't know about Kogpo.

Q

It was two, three days after the demise of the 13th.

A

I am not sure about the time.

Q

Lungshar was the main force who backed and caused Kujar's downfall and exile, right?

A

Lungshar was there at that time, but Trimön was the most powerful at that juncture.

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Q

Trimön was a shape so had no influence or power in the tsondu.

A

Lungshar and his group were the main force in the tsondu gyendzom.

Q

At that time, from Sera, the monks like the one nicknamed "the big horse," Tikijag, Chamsur la [tib. byams zur lags] and from Drepung Sog Depa [tib. sog sde pa] also attended the tsondu. Who was this Sog depa?

A

He was from Gomang.

Q

I don't understand how they were allowed to attend the tsondu?

A

They might have attended the tsondu as representatives.

Q

But only the abbots can attend the tsondu as representatives.

A

I think there was a precedent established during the Prime Minister, Lönchen Shatra's time [tib. blon chen bshad sgra] when the Ganden Chandzö Naring and some Drepung monks attended the tsondu. Ganden Chandzö Naring is said to have attended the Kashag too. Later he became the Jigyab Khenpo, the highest ecclesiastical office. His real name was Khenpo Palden Thöndrup [tib. dpal ldan don grub]. So there was such a tradition by which not only the abbots but also other monks could attend the tsondu. This tradition was discontinued during the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama.

Q

So was it revived just after the demise of the 13th?

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A

Yes. I am not sure whether they were sent by the Laji or whether it was a suggestion from the government officials that in addition to the Abbots, efficient and able persons from the monastic side should attend the tsondu. Tikijag and others were very popular figures at that time.

Q

What was the talk in the [Drepung] monastery, when Reting Rinpoche became the Regent?

A

It was said at that time that the 13th Dalai Lama visited Reting a year before his demise and had shown great fondness and good will towards Reting Rinpoche and was believed to have confided in him many things during their meeting. The 13th had even presented him the "dice" he used for divination calculations.

Q

Did you hear about these during that same period?

A

Yes. It was said that the reason why Reting Rinpoche was appointed the Regent was that he was already approved by the 13th.

Q

Actually, the appointment was done through "senriy," drawing lottery system, right?

A

Yes. The candidates proposed were Reting, Minyag Ami [tib. mi nyag a mes] and Phurbujog Rinpoche. Although they were all high Lamas, yet Reting Rinpoche seemed to be the right person.

Q

What about Phurbujog Rinpoche?

A

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He was very a learned and a knowledgeable person, but was limited in political matters.

Q

If so, then why his name was proposed in the candidacy?

A

He was the tutor to the 13th Dalai Lama. Besides, people say that the 13th had special respect and affection for him. He used to call him to Norbulinga, take teachings from him, and also used to take him around the palace for a walk and show him many flowers. However, when the Dalai Lama asked him did you see that flowers, he always says that he was not paying attention. Therefore the Dalai Lama would be unhappy and even scolded the servants and he also told Phurbujog that I heard that your servants need to help you to tie your belt. I could tie my belt by myself even when I was young.

Q

Minyag Ami too was a strange character.

A

He was the reigning Ganden Tripa. He was a great person but at the same time he was frank and ingenuous and naive and unsophisticated. Such a person was not fit to be Regent. He was, at that time, the reigning Ganden Tripa and Champa Chödrak was the ex-Ganden Tripa. Champa Chödrak was twice appointed Ganden Tripa.

Q

How was this done?

A

It was done through the arbitrary wish of the Dalai Lama. Actually, there was an ex-Ganden Tripa called Jangyab Trisur [tib. lchang rgyab khri zur], but Champa Chödrag was appointed again.

Q

In this the way the Sharjang Chöje [tib. shar byang chos rje] lost his chance to become Gaden Tripa?

A

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Yes. There was no choice.

Q

How did they manage the turns of being the Ganden Tripa? The turn was Changtse Chöje's [tib. byang rtse chos rje], right?

A

Yes, Jangyab Trisur must be the Shartse. The 13th Dalai Lama was very arbitrary and would always want to have everything his own way and would not listen to anybody.

Q

Yes, he was very strict and powerful too.

A

Yes. He used to select the monks with good voices from the Lama Gyüpa for Namgye Tratsang, his personal monastery. He even appointed the ex-shengo as the Dalai Lama's personal attendant in charge of offerings, the Chöpön and clothes, the Simpon Khenpo [tib. gzim dpon mkhan po] although this was usually appointed from among the monks of Namgye Tratsang.

Q

The personal attendant in charge of the offering, Chöpön Khenpo [tib. mchod dpon mkhan po] was appointed from among the monks of Namgye Tratsang.

A

Yes, actually Simpön Khenpo was appointed from among the tsidrung ranks, but Tsatrül Rinpoche was appointed as the Simpön Khenpo after the ex-shengo of Loseling was appointed as the Simpön Khenpo. The 13th disregarded all the rules of tradition. This certainly created much discomfort in the hearts of many. But nobody could speak against him.

Q

What were the achievements of Reting Rinpoche during his Regency?

A

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The country experienced great peace and prosperity. In the event of wars, things seemed to have been settled amicably through peaceful talks.

Q

Which war are you referring too?

A

It was during the Reting period that he sent his emissaries to China and it was said that they returned with success.

Q

What was the "trouble" at that time?

A

It seems some trouble had come up between Tibet and Chinese government and Reting sent his emissaries to Chiang Kaishek to settle the matter.

Q

Who did he send?

A

I don't remember the names of the officials sent by him but it was said that they were sent with gifts of golden cup stands for the Chinese ruler. Actually, the Khendrönlosum office was functioning in China, at that time.

Q

Was there Khendrönlosum at that time?

A

It seems some trouble had come up between the Tibetan and Chinese governments and Reting sent his emissaries to Chiang Kaishek to settle the matter.

Q

Who did he send?

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A

I don't remember the names of the officials sent by him but it was said that they were sent with gifts of golden cup stands and lid for the Chinese ruler. Actually, the Khendrönlosum office was functioning in China, at that time.

Q

Was there Khendrönlosum office in China at the that time? At the time of the 13th's demise?

A

It was there but it might have been discontinued after the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibet's independence. Actually, China never had a stable leadership, they were always engaged in civil wars.

Q

What kind of trouble did Tibet have with the Chinese during Reting Rinpoche's period?

A

Some trouble surely arose during Reting time, but because of the merit of Reting, Chiang Kaishek also respected him very highly. The elders used to say that Reting Rinpoche was a very fortunate ruler and that everything was settled peacefully and with much success. It was also said that the then Chinese ruler showered great honor and respect on Reting. Later it was also said the Reting was the suppresser of China.

Q

Could you now tell me about the Lungshar trouble

A

The talk that circulated in public was that Lungshar was a devil-incarnate and that he practiced black magic and even cursed the 13th Dalai Lama and Reting. The rumors we heard at that time said that he had even attempted his black art on the 13th Dalai Lama and he held a meeting in the house called Ngagkhang [tib. sngags khang] and took signatures on blank paper and Dagpo Drumpa [tib. dwags po bhrum pa] who was related to the 13th Dalai Lama, refused to sign on the paper. Drumpa was normally said to be bit eccentric and very sleepy person. At that moment too, when Lungshar asked for his

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signature, he was found dozing. When he woke up and saw the plain paper on which he was to sign, he openly refused to sign on it. He then stood up and walked straight in the middle of the gathering and reported this to the Drönyerchemmo Apso.

Q

Apso and Kogpo, are they two different persons?

A

Yes. Kogpo was appointed after the death of Apso. When I went to take the monk's vow from the Dalai Lama, it was coincident with the enthronement of Kogpo and I heard that Kogpo had a good relationship with our labrang and we also borrowed the place to make tea. Regarding the cause of the Kogpo's death, some even said that he died of heart disease.

Q

Yes, some said that and while others said that his death was caused by the Gönpö, the deity of Norbulinga, as if Gönpö had no other work to do.

A

When I was in Boddhgaya, India, I met Gomang Talama, a Mongolian who was said to be the chandzö of Telopa Huthogthu. We traveled in the same train in India. He was well informed about communism. He told me once while we were circumambulating the Boddhgaya Stupa, "Now the situation in Tibet is a very difficult one with the arrival of the Chinese." Those days our mentality on such matters were very orthodox so my reply to him was that nothing bad will ever happen to Tibet because the dharma of the Buddha is flourishing and the "master and the disciple" [tib. rgyal ba yab sras] (Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama) are still living, and besides that, to guard the Dharma we have the protector deities. Hence nothing will happen. My reply did not impress him and he further said, "The great Nalanda and Boddhgaya were destroyed only by men. The Gönpö [deity] of Nalanda was put out of a job and he came to our Gomang Tratsang." He said such things.

Q

This is a fact?

A

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We used to think ourselves formidable and people even said that airplanes cannot land in Tibet.

Q

I heard that once, one of our kalön told a Chinese or a British officer that no airplane can land in Tibet. When the other person asked the reason, our kalön said that Tibet is situated at a very high altitude. So the other person just laughed and said nothing.

A

It was a problem those days to land at high altitude but today men have reached on the moon and mars too.

Q

I heard that this Mongolian Talama was one of the high ranking spies. He is said to have been paid by the Japanese and some other nations too.

A

Our country never had any experience with espionage systems so because of that we did not know about the spies functioning in our Gyerong Khamtsen. We simply believed that they had really come to study Buddhist scriptures. The Mongolians had more experience as they were under foreign domination for many years.

Q

At that time, Gyerong Khamtsen was filled with spies.

A

Yes, we came to know about them only later on and I also told him you should belong to the Chinese, Gya Khamtsen, but he said no. Probably, he was send to Gyerong Khamtsen.

Q

Actually, there was not a single Chinese person in the Chinese Khamtsen, right?

A

I heard that there used to be two Chinese and they would become Khamtsen Gegen in turn. We learned that our Gyerong Khamtsen was filled with many spies. Actually,

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there was a separate khamtsen for the Chinese, called Gya Khamtsan. But gradually the number of Chinese declined and later there were only two Chinese monks in the Gya Khamtsen. So after these two Chinese monks, Gya Khamtsan was closed, and later Chinese entered in the Gyerong Khamtsen.

Q

In the Gyerong Khamtsen, there are monks from Dartsedo, right?

Q

In the Gyerong Khamtsen, there are monks from nearly all of the 18 districts of Gyerong like Woshiya and Sinea, etc and the Gyerong Khensur was from Sinea.

Q

Were those under the Trochupön [tib. khro chu dpon]

A

No, though he occupied some parts of Gyerong, he had his own area called Troshab [tib. khro zhabs]

Q

What were the other charges against Lungshar?

A

There was talk that Lungshar practiced a certain necromancy, called "Gesar Damo" [tib. ge sar mda' mo] or Gesar's Arrow. It was also said that Lungshar used black magic against Shatra's [tib. bshad sgra] son who was a tsipön. Such was the varied gossip at that time. Lungshar's Lama who was a very reputed Lama, escaped to Shar Khumbu [in Nepal] during Lungshar's trouble and died there. His name was Dzogchen [tib. rdzogs chen] Rinpoche.

Q

What was the real cause of Lungshar's trouble? The practice of black magic could not be the only cause?

A

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The real trouble started during the time of the 13th Dalai Lama. The famous Tsarong too was there at the time. Then the 13th sent Tsarong to India and made Lungshar the magji.

Q

No. It was not Lungshar. It was Drumba.

A

Lungshar too was appointed to some post.

Q

Lungshar was appointed to the post of Guardian Magji 'Magji Tshonzin.' [tib. 'tsho 'dzin]

A

That must be true. It was said that they tried to establish a "People's Government " [tib. mi ser rgyal khab]. Drönyerchemmo Apso had reported to the 13th, "They have conspired to send you to the Genphel Hermitage [tib. dge 'phel ri khrod] and throw me in the river wrapped in a leather bag. And Tsarong planned to become the king." It was said that they did make preparations for establishing a democratic setup. After the demise of the 13th, they met again.

Q

Tsarong was not involved in the later period?

A

Maybe he was not in the later period.

Q

Who were those involved at the time? And what did they do after the meeting?

A

Kapshöpa was involved. There was much talk about Kapshöpa's "two-faced" deeds. In the beginning, I heard that Kapshöpa was in the Lungshar group.

Q

Were there any special happenings in Drepung?

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A

It was said that Kapshöpa informed Trimön of something and then Trimön went to Drepung to Tenmey Simkhang [tib. bstan ma'i gzim khang]. It is not exactly known where Trimön stayed at Drepung.

Q

How did you learn about Trimön's arrival in Drepung? It was also said that he came to Tsethang Khamtsen [tib. rtsed thang] and it was said that he came to home of Trimön Chondze.

A

Yes.

Q

Did he go to Genphel Hermitage or Tenmey Simkhang?

A

I think it was kind of secret and he stayed in both places. I heard this all of a sudden while in the dharma grove. Some said that he had escaped from Lhasa, while others said he had defected to the Drepung Laji. He did not stay for long.

Q

Normally the Laji of Drepung has to go and meet the kalöns whenever a shape visited the monastery. Did they go to meet Trimön at that time?

A

Yes. Normally the Laji had to meet the kalön.

Q

Was Lungshar arrested after Trimön returned?

A

Yes. Trimön became the main power after he returned from Drepung.

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Q

So Lungshar was eliminated completely.

A

Yes.

Q

Lungshar is said to have had the backing of Sendregasum. It was said that there were letters and other documents to prove this point. I heard that Sog Depa had signed a pledge with Lunshar.

A

I see. I don't know whatever internal understanding he might have had with Sendregasum, but externally the monks did not like him. He was believed to be a devil-incarnate. It was said that a prophecy of Lamo Tshangpa [tib. la mo tshangs pa] said, "The Minster Trishu of the past, is now born in the East of the land." [tib. sngar gyi blon po kri shu de/ dus da cha lung pa'i shar nas dar] Acting on this prophecy, the monks of Tashilunpo had finished off another person in Lungshar's native place and since the present Lungshar was clever and shrewd, he escaped. The prophecy said the incarnation of Trishu was born in the East of the land, which was the name of Lungshar's birth place. Literally, Lungshar means, "East of the Land." So, the monks caught a wrong person, while the real person had escaped to Lhasa. This is a legend told among the monks. We have no idea about whatever understanding and rapport he might have had with the heads of the monasteries.

Q

Did you know whether when Trimön went to Drepung, the head or the Laji of Drepung went to Lhasa and met the Regent and the Silon?

A

I haven't heard anything about it.

Q

Lungshar set up a party called, "Kyichog Kundu." [tib. skyid phyogs kun 'dus] Do you know anything about this?

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A

I don't know anything about it. I only heard that Lungshar had conspired to become king himself.

Q

Then, during Reting Rinpoche's Regency he went to the "Sacred Lake" to see a prophecy in the lake. Can you tell me about it?

A

I don't know much about it, except that Ami Rinpoche, the Ganden Tripa, was approached by the government to do the divination regarding the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. He revealed through his divination that the new Dalai Lama will be born at such and such a place. Later, gossip circulated widely that Ami Rinpoche will be punished by the government because of his wrong revelations regarding the incarnation of the Dalai Lama. Ami Rinpoche heard this and during a huge religious congregation, told the gathering that he had done no offence to cause him to now face the government's punishment. He further said that he did not go to the government and request to let him make the divination but they came to him and requested him to do the divination.

Q

What did he prophesize?

A

I heard that he made a very clear and open prophecy regarding the reincarnation of Dalai Lama at the dharma grove in Lhasa.

Q

Is the present Dalai Lama the one prophesied by him?

A

No. I don't think so. Some even said that it was not a divination but a mirror divination, [tib. dpra]. Ami Rinpoche said that I was asked by the government to pronounce my divination and I just revealed whatever came in the divination and I did not concoct anything, so there is no reason that I should face any punishment.

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Q

Ami Rinpoche was basically a very eccentric person.

A

Yes. Once he gave a very strongly worded admonition to the Abbots of Sendregasum during a religious congregation. He pointed out that the abbots should seriously look after the conduct and discipline of the monks. He said if the abbots are not capable of discharging their duties properly they should not have taken the responsibility in the first place. He further ridiculed those who said that times are bad. He said, "Times are bad, that is why one should be stricter. In the beginning of human civilization, there were no kings but gradually human beings were inflicted with the vices of lies and deception." So kings who were respected by the majority came into existence. He said that the Great Fifth Dalai Lama established the institution of the Tshogchen Shengo, the disciplinarian of the Great Mönlam Prayer Festival and under him there are two Chagdampa [tib. phyag dam pa]. Under there were 16 geyog carrying sticks and swords. They are appointed to punish the wrong-doers. He further insisted that the Abbots of the Three Sendregasum should discharge their duties sincerely once they have taken their posts.

Q

I have never heard a Ganden Tripa scolding like this. Usually they just gave their teaching like paying a tax, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Could you tell me about the Golden Stupa which was build to encase the body of the 13th Dalai Lama?

A

Yes, we, the Tshogchen Trüku have to attend the ceremony on its completion in Tse. Mainly, Trijang Rinpoche [tib. khri byang rin po che], Ling [tib gling] Rinpoche, Ketsang [tib. ke tshang] Rinpoche and Taktra Rinpoche were the main ones in charge of the building of the stupa. There was an elaborate ceremony on the day when they brought the "body" of the 13th to the Stupa. Then in the old meeting hall, they gave gifts like dresses of brocade

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called Tagshun and a new fox cap and rainbow boots and they had to wear them at that ceremony. The master craftsmen were also given gifts.

Q

What happens if the shoes do not fit?

A

They have made those shoes especially for them to fit. Some gossip from the back said that he [Trimön] was the giver of gifts as well as the taker.

Q

Rampa and Trogawo too were the staff in charge, right.

A

Yes, they were. Reting Rinpoche was at that time the newly appointed Regent, so Trimön was the pivotal figure among the kalöns.

Q

But Trimön was not heard of at the time of Reting's resignation.

A

Trimön was the Shape Tripa.

Q

No. He wasn't the Shape Tripa at the time of Reting's resignation.

A

Trimön was the Shape Tripa after Tsarong.

Q

Tsarong wasn't a Shape Tripa but he was the Commander-in-chief of Tibet [tib. bod ljongs dmag spyi chen mo].

A

He was demoted from the magji.

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Q

After that, he became a Theji.

A

When I went to see him, he was the Shape Tripa.

Q

Why did Tsarong get demoted?

A

He did something wrong and the Dalai Lama demoted him. Probably, he didn't get along with Kujar.

Q

That's right.

A

I also heard that he slapped Kujar. There was a lot of talk. It was said that they had the quarrel in front of the Dalai Lama and he slapped him saying, "You are new. What do you know?" Then he was demoted and some say that the Dalai Lama acted smart and demoted him when the Dalai Lama was alive. If he was left in his position as he was, when the Dalai Lama died Tsarong would have faced misfortune.

Q

I heard that Tsarong himself said that if the Dalai Lama hadn't made him take leave, when the Dalai Lama would get sick, I would definitely given him an aspirin and I would have been blamed for poisoning the Dalai Lama with foreign medicine.

A

I heard the Dalai Lama had a great affection for Tsarong and even after he was demoted, he would send Tsarong messages written on samdra.